

The Distribution by Age and Marital Status of the Population of England and Wales in 1961

SOME FACTS

IT IS UNFORTUNATE for those interested in statistical questions of fertility that the programme of British Census publications provides for the issue of the Tables relative to the family at the end of a protracted series of volumes. Nevertheless, progress is being made with the 1961 Census releases and a Report relating to *Age, Marital Conditions and General Tables*, has now appeared.* Its principal interest to members of the *Society* is in respect of the information it contains about proportions married, while the question of age-composition is also relevant. As, however, estimates of the distribution of the population by age and marital status are published annually, and figures for 1961 have already been provided some while ago, it is of more importance to test the accuracy of the estimates against the Census out-turn than it is to look at the general characteristics of the data. The expected and actual proportions married are as follows:

Age	PROPORTIONS MARRIED (England and Wales)			
	Estimates for mid-1961		Census 1961	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
15-19	0.01	0.07	0.01	0.07
20-24	0.31	0.59	0.31	0.58
25-29	0.71	0.85	0.70	0.84
30-34	0.84	0.90	0.82	0.88
35-39	0.87	0.88	0.86	0.88
40-44	0.88	0.87	0.88	0.86
45-49	0.88	0.83	0.88	0.83
50-54	0.88	0.78	0.88	0.78
55-59	0.87	0.71	0.87	0.71
60-64	0.86	0.62	0.85	0.61
65-69	0.81	0.49	0.81	0.49
70-74	0.75	0.37	0.73	0.37
75 and over	0.52	0.20	0.55	0.21

* HMSO. Pp. xv + 108. Price 22s.

It will be seen that the estimates were very successful and should have been fully sufficient for most practical purposes.

The comparison with 1951 at the younger ages is as follows:

PROPORTIONS MARRIED
(England and Wales)

Age	Men		Women	
	1951	1961	1951	1961
15-19	0.01	0.01	0.04	0.07
20-24	0.23	0.31	0.48	0.58
25-29	0.65	0.70	0.77	0.84
30-34	0.80	0.82	0.83	0.88
35-39	0.85	0.86	0.83	0.88
40-44	0.87	0.88	0.81	0.86

and it illustrates not only the strong tendency towards younger marriage, with which readers will be familiar, but also the improved chances of marriage available to women—representing a cut of about one-third in the numbers permanently remaining spinsters.

The new Census volume goes, of course, much further into detail than the yearly estimates could. It not only provides figures for individual ages and for various areas, but also shows the corresponding figures for earlier censuses and summarizes the changes that have occurred. (It furthermore gives the same particulars of inmates of hotels, boarding houses and other institutions.)

So far as the distribution of the population by age is concerned, the following figures summarize the changes in age-groups between 1951 and 1961 as shown in the table on the following page.

DISTRIBUTION BY AGE AND MARITAL STATUS

Age	1951		1961	
	number	per cent	number	per cent
0-14	9.69	22.2	10.58	23.0
15-44	18.68	42.7	18.18	39.4
45-64	10.56	24.1	11.84	25.7
65 and over	4.83	11.0	5.50	11.9
TOTAL (Millions)	43.76		46.10	

The proportions of the old and the young have both increased by nearly 1 per cent at the expense of the working age-groups, where the population has become a little older on the average. These changes are mainly a reflection of changes in fertility at various times in the past, and in particular they mirror the high

level of births around 1900, the fall in births in the early part of the century and the recovery during the past decade.

A further decline in the ratio of numbers of women to numbers of men is revealed in the following figures:

Age	1951	1961
0-14	0.95	0.95
15-29	1.03	0.98
30-44	1.03	1.01
45-64	1.15	1.09

The cause of the change is the cessation of losses of men through mortality and emigration, and the result is the improved chances of marriage for women to which reference has been made above.